

Abraham Lincoln papers

From Congregational Church at Paterson New Jersey to Abraham Lincoln, July 4, 1864

To His Excellency Abraham Lincoln,

President of the United States.

The Sunday School of the Congregational Church of Paterson, New Jersey, assembled on this Fourth day of July 1864, to celebrate according to their custom our National Independence, do hereby reaffirm their belief in the principles enunciated eighty eight years ago by the "Fathers of the Republic", and with them "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these, are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

Believing this, it has always been a source of sorrow to us that while we were enjoying these unalienable rights there were millions in our own country to whom the Fourth of July brought no joy, — in whose hearts the sight of "the stars and stripes" awakened no emotions of gladness — because their unalienable rights were stolen from them, and they were denied the blessed privileges which we enjoy and were counted as cattle, and like cattle bought and sold, and even denied the right to learn to read about God and Christ, in the Sunday School.

We were glad when we learned that you had made a Proclamation of Freedom, by which so many of these poor slaves have been restored, and so many more are yet to be restored to the rights and the liberties which the nation, in defiance of God's Law and the Declaration of Independence, had so long robbed them of. But while we were very glad, we were very sorry too. And our sorrow was because while you had struck the chains from so many, you had not freed all within your power.

And we now write you this letter to ask you, in the name of God, who made them; — in the name of Christ, who died for them; — in the name of the Declaration of Independence, which declares their right to Freedom; — in the name of Free Government, which is disgraced by Slavery; — in the name of Justice, which is violated; — in the name of Humanity, which is outraged; — in the name of those who have gone out from our own school and offered their lives in defence of the Nation; and lastly in the name of our Nation whose life is still at stake; that you will speedily make another proclamation of Freedom for all those whom your first proclamation passed by — so that all the slaves in the republic may be free men and free women: So that when we again meet to celebrate the day which is sometimes called the birthday of Liberty, we may feel that there is no mockery in the matter, and we may read the Declaration of Independence without blushing for shame



And our prayer is that God may give you Wisdom, and Courage and Strength to do this act of Justice, and thus complete the good work for which we believe He has appointed you and called you to the Rulership of the Nation.

Paterson, New Jersey. July 4th 1864.

Very Respectfully Yours,

[182 signatures follow.]